

## NOTE VII.

## ON HELOGALE PARVULA, SUNDEVALL.

BY

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*Helogale parvula* Sundevall.

Dr. Gray created in 1861 (P. Z. S. L. p. 308) the genus *Helogale* and thus separated three small species of African Mongoosees with the dental formula I.  $\frac{3}{3}$ , C.  $\frac{1}{1}$ , P. M.  $\frac{3}{3}$ , M.  $\frac{2}{2}$  = 36, from the other true *Herpestidae*. The three species are: *Herpestes parvulus* Sundevall (1846), collected by Wahlberg in the neighborhood of Natal, *Herpestes undulatus* Peters (1852) from Mossambique, and *Ichneumon taenionotus* Smith (1835) from S. Africa (Natal apud Gray). A skull (P. Z. S. L. 1861, p. 308), belonging to a skeleton (Catalogue of the bones, 1862, p. 76) of one of Smith's types, was in the British Museum, but it seems that the skeleton has been lost, for in P. Z. S. L., 1864, p. 565, Gray states that in the British Museum is a skull only; meanwhile the teeth had increased in number, from 36 (in 1861) to 40 (in 1864)! Now Gray thought it correct to give another genus-name to that highly interesting skull and called it *Ariela taenionota* and under the very name he cited it in the Catalogue of the Carnivorous a. s. o. Mammalia, 1869, p. 163. Later on the number of teeth again decreased from 40 (in 1869) to 36 (in 1882) and finally Oldfield Thomas (on the African Mongoosees, P. Z. S. L. 1882, p. 90) placed it under the synonyma of *Crossarchus fasciatus* Desmarest, where I hope that it will be buried for ever.

As Oldfield Thomas observed in the above named excellent monograph, there are in most of the larger European Museums typical specimens of Sundevall's *Herpestes parvulus*; so we possess too one of these type-specimens with its skull.

In comparing this skull with the figure of the skull of *Helogale parvula* on p. 308 (P. Z. S. L. 1861) or with that given by Peters on pl. XXV (Reise nach Mossambique) of *Herpestes undulatus*, I find no difference at all. Oldfield Thomas wrote (l. c., 1882) that in *H. parvula* the skull is larger and the last molar smaller in proportion, but Thomas gives the length of a skull of *H. parvula* = 1.82 inches, meanwhile Peters said that the skulls of the types of *undulatus* measure 48 and 46 mM., or 1.9 and 1.82 inches (the Taita-skull, see Thomas, seems to be  $\frac{1}{10}$  of an inch larger), so that I state that there is no difference in length between the skull of *H. parvula* in the British Museum (and I may add also in the Leyden Museum, as our skull measures too 1.82 inches) and that of one of the types of *H. undulata* in the Berlin Museum; the other in the Berlin Museum being somewhat larger and the Taita-specimen in the British Museum is a still larger specimen. The difference in size between the last molars of the two supposed species is too small to take in consideration (*H. parvula*, *a* has  $M^2 = 4.0$ , *b* has  $M^2 = 4.1$ , and *H. undulata*, *a* has  $M^2 = 4.0$ , cf. Thomas, P. Z. S. L., 1882, p. 80).

According to Gray, Peters and Thomas there is however a difference in color between *H. parvula* and *H. undulata*, but I remember that it is a well known fact that there is often an enormous variation in color in the different specimens of a given species belonging to the *Herpestes*-group (see Temminck and Oldfield Thomas), so that color alone is in this case a character of second order in distinguishing species.

In my opinion therefore there is known only a single species of *Helogale*, *H. parvula* Sundevall; this opinion is

supported by two specimens, belonging to a *Helogale*-species, received the other day from Gambo or Gambos (interior of Mossamedes) by Mr. v. d. Kellen.

One of these specimens, the skin and skeleton of an adult male, has the skull exactly agreeing in size and shape with the skull of Sundevall's type-specimen in our Museum, but the color of the fur is less dark, more reddish-yellow, than in Sundevall's: the other, a much younger individual with a not yet fully developed dentition, has the fur darker tinged than v. d. Kellen's adult one, somewhat intermediate between the latter and Sundevall's. The skeleton presents 7 cervicales, 13 costales, 7 lumbares, 3 sacrales and 28 caudales; that are the same numbers as Peters found in the skeleton of his *Herpestes undulatus*, the only difference being 3 caudales less in Peters' specimen.

The habitat of *Helogale parvula* is perhaps the whole Southern part of Africa, as we know it from Mossambique, Natal and the interior of Mossamedes.

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